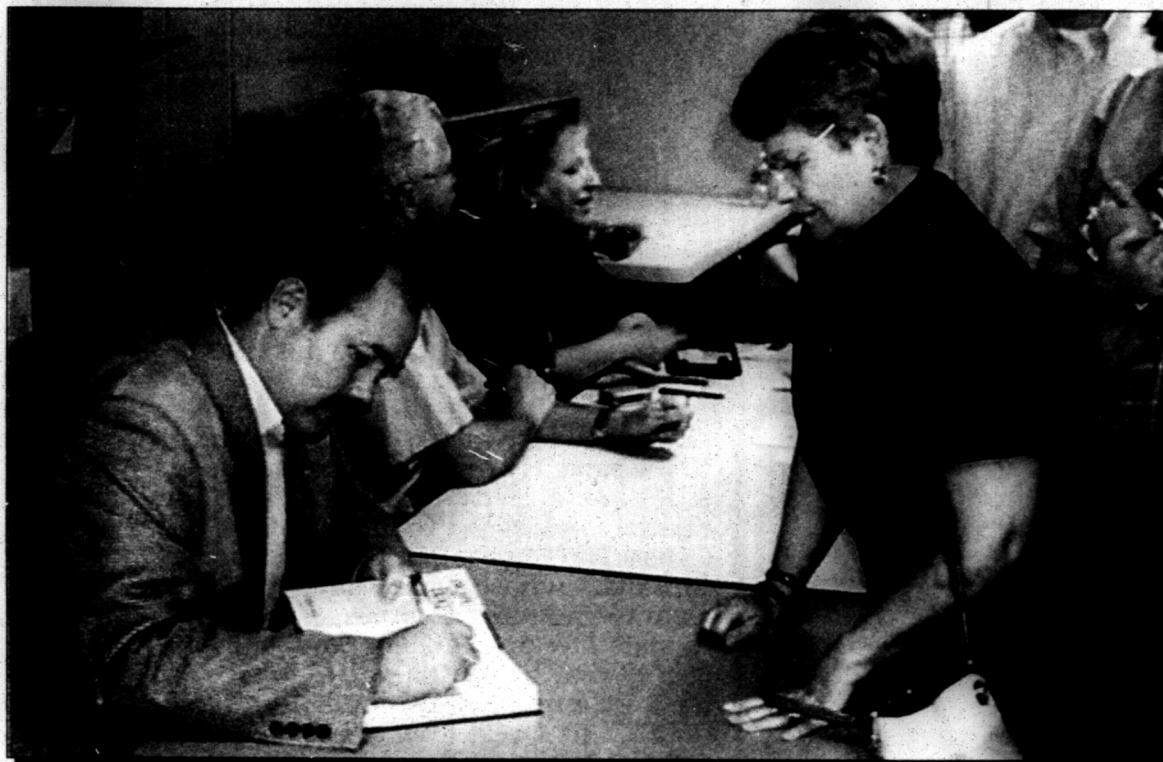


Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

Iraq captive describes harrowing ordeal

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor



TALE OF ESCAPE — Former Iraq hostage Thomas Hamill (seated, left) signs his book, *Escape From Iraq: The Thomas Hamill Story*, for Linda Williams, a member of Morrison Heights Church, Clinton, after Hamill spoke at the church in May. Seated next to Hamill is co-author Paul Brown. (BR photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

"I'm just an ordinary guy from a small town in Mississippi," Thomas Hamill told the audience gathered to hear him speak last month at Morrison Heights Church, Clinton.

While he may consider himself an "ordinary guy," his story of captivity and escape in Iraq is anything but ordinary. Hired to drive large fuel supply trucks for a civilian contractor, Hamill found himself in the middle of a convoy ambush on April 9, 2004.

"It was like running through a gauntlet five miles long," said the former dairy farmer who attends Calvary Church in Macon. "I was sending a message on the computer when a bullet came through the door and hit me in the forearm."

Forced to abandon his flaming truck, Hamill missed by seconds the last Humvee military vehicle leaving the scene of the ambush. "I tried to crawl away," he said, but he was soon discovered by Iraqi militants who beat him with rifle butts before throwing him into a automobile and speeding away from the ambush site.

A short time later, the automobile stopped to allow an Australian television crew to shoot the now-famous video footage of Hamill in the back seat, cradling his badly injured arm and identifying himself while the militants trained their automatic rifles on him. After a few seconds, the militants sped away with their prisoner.

Hamill said he received medical treatment for his arm and was frequently moved from place to place by three captors he nicknamed Larry, Curly, and Moe, after The Three Stooges characters. He even escaped once while his captors were absent, but was forced to turn back.

Hamill admitted that his church attendance had been irregular before leaving for Iraq, but he said he was always a believer. "I was never discouraged," he said. "I thought, 'It's your will, God. If I die today, I'm a saved man.'"

After being moved yet again, Hamill said, he awoke on May 2 to the sound of convoy vehicles nearby. "God reached down and tapped me on the shoulder at the right time," he recalled.

With his captors once again absent, he said he prayed, "I'm putting this in your hands, God," and pushed against the door of the dilapidated building. The door fell aside and he ran toward the American soldiers, falling down twice while yelling, "American! American!"

It was after his rescue that he learned all six of his convoy colleagues had died in the ambush, along with two American soldiers. "I recognized the awesome power of prayer," Hamill said.

He returned to his Mississippi home on May 8, and attended worship at Calvary Church on May 9. "My life has been changed. I always wondered how I could be a born-again Christian. I didn't have a real life-changing experience until this," he told Baptist Press in a June 2004 interview. "I guess when something like this happens, you have to put it completely in the Lord's hands."

Hamill has written a book about the ordeal, *Escape in Iraq: The Thomas Hamill Story*, which debuted at No. 31 on the New York Times Best Seller List.

Hamill is scheduled to speak at the Mississippi Baptist Convention's 2005 annual meeting, during the November 1 afternoon session at First Church, Jackson.

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MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Miss. CP dips in May

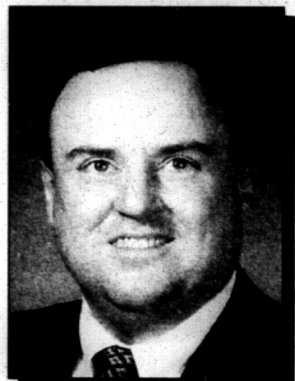
Gifts to the work of the Lord through the Mississippi Cooperative Program (CP) dropped in May compared to the previous month but showed an increase over the same period in 2004, according to Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board which disburses the funds. The May total of \$2,261,757 is 18.2% lower than the \$2,766,379 given last month, but five percent higher than the \$2,153,402 given in the same period in 2004. Total Mississippi CP giving for the current fiscal year, which runs from January-December, stands at \$13,654,754, which is 5.1% above last year's giving during the same period and 4.6% ahead of current year budget needs. The 2005 Mississippi CP budget of \$31,314,491, was approved by messengers to the 2004 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. A total of \$2,609,541 is needed each month to meet the convention board's budget for 2005. In addition to helping support more than 10,700 missionaries in the U.S. and around the world through affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, Mississippi CP also helps fund such programs as the Summer Missions Camp for Boys on June 20-24 at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko, the HeartSong Youth Music Week on June 28-July 2 at Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian, and WorldChangers events in Vicksburg, Hattiesburg, Meridian, and Tupelo.

SBC CP down for month

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Contributions through the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Cooperative Program (CP) for May were \$16,786,016 — down 1.6% from the \$17,069,791 received the previous month, and one-half percent, or \$87,611 above the \$16,698,405 received in May 2004, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Morris H. Chapman in Nashville. Year-to-date contributions through the SBC CP are up two per cent compared to the same time frame in 2004. As of May 31, the year-to-date total of \$132,461,923 for Cooperative Program (CP) Missions is \$2,765,295 ahead of the \$129,696,628 received at the same point in 2004. Designated giving of \$157,358,631 for the same year-to-date period is three percent, or \$4,832,257, ahead of gifts of \$152,526,373 received at this point last year. The \$26,046,324 in designated gifts received last month is \$5,062,576 above the \$20,983,748 received in May 2004, an increase of 24%. For the SBC CP Allocation Budget, the year-to-date total of \$132,461,923 is 108.5 percent of the \$122,134,463 budgeted, or \$10,327,461 above budget to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. At the close of their last fiscal year, Oct. 1, 2003-Sept. 30, 2004, Southern Baptists recorded a 3.6% increase in CP giving, for a record total of \$189,865,254.85. The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention.



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Government by and for gamblers

Coming on the heels of U.S. District Judge Tom Lee's ruling on June 1 that abortion clinics do not have to follow surgical guidelines set forth by the Mississippi Legislature in the performance of their grisly work, the state's moral fabric took another blow when Hinds County Chancery Judge Patricia Wise ruled on June 3 that Mississippi's public institutions of higher learning can proceed with plans to prepare our young people for careers in the gambling industry.

The members of the Board of Institutions of Higher Learning in Mississippi had already declared themselves above state law, which clearly and unambiguously prohibits the teaching of gambling-related courses in the state's public universities, and sued to have the state law overturned. This has made for an interesting situation: a state entity suing the mother state that created it, while the mother state is being defended by its attorney general — all at taxpayer expense, of course. Whoever wins, the taxpayers lose (as usual).

Tulane University in New Orleans, which apparently is not subject to the same laws as Mississippi's universities, is already teaching gambling-related courses on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, whose sprawling Neshoba County gambling complex is not subject to state law or oversight, announced on May 9 that both Tulane University and East Central Community College (ECCC) in Decatur will be allowed to teach gambling-related courses at the Choctaw Hospitality Institute (CHI).

"East Central Community College is pleased to partner with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to provide education opportunities to provide jobs for our area. We feel the ECCC Hotel Restaurant Program taught at the Choctaw Hospitality Institute has the potential to become a premier program

in the nation," said ECCC President Phil A. Sutphin.

My, what flowery language! One would think the school was announcing a new degree program in nursing or landscape architecture, not in the fine points of running a gambling hall. That's how the gambling/political complex smoothes over the language ("gambling") and marginalizes the true drawbacks of giving them whatever they want.

Here's a prime example. Tim Tubby, executive director of the Choctaw Hospitality Institute, said of the Choctaw/ECCC joint venture, "This is a unique opportunity for those looking to enter the hospitality field or those wanting to expand their knowledge."

A "unique opportunity?" To "enter the hospitality field?" To "expand their knowledge?" Knowledge of what, if not the gambling business?

Tubby goes on. "The fact that it will be held at CHI will offer students, not only a classroom setting, but hands on experience they can't get anywhere but the workplace."

That "hands on experience" in the "workplace" will occur, of course, in the casinos. Why then can't proponents be honest and simply call them gambling courses? What else can possibly be taught on the floor of a casino?

Don't be fooled. Gambling is gambling. Gambling courses are gambling courses. From the beginning, pro-gambling forces

"LEARN TO WAIT ON THE LORD, DEAR. GOD IS NOT INTO MICROWAVING, BUT MARINATING."



have lied to us to get their way. This is just the latest example. Mississippians, blinded again and again by unfulfilled promises of untold riches, have swallowed all the lies and allowed our state government to be co-opted to do their bidding.

Thanks to the duplicity of the gambling/political complex and our own craven greed, we have effectively traded government by and for the people in favor of government by and for gamblers.

Makes you wonder what else they're not telling us, doesn't it?

GUEST OPINION:



Don't be robbed of greatest joy

By John Avant, vice-president
North American Mission Board
Atlanta

Evangelism is so much fun, it should almost be illegal! Not many Christians think that way, do they? Well, why not? After all, the word "evangelism" means "to announce the good news" — but to many followers of Christ, evangelism feels like bad news. It's another thing on our spiritual to-do list, another class to attend, another thing for which we don't have time. It's scary, it's for "super Christians," and though we feel guilty about it, it's just not something that most Christians ever do.

How in the world did we get to this place? Without a fresh movement of evangelism, we will watch our children's generation sprint into hell, our culture rot, and our churches wither. We have been robbed of the greatest joy of following Christ, and it ought to make us mad. It ought to make every Southern Baptist stand up in determination and take back from the enemy what he stole: the heart-pounding, purpose-filled life, the call to follow Jesus into people's lives every day with good news!

That's all evangelism really is, you know: sharing good

news with friends. Now that's not scary to anyone. Have you ever had really great news to tell a friend? Did you dread it? Were you glad to get it over with? Of course not. It made your day. We have eternal good news to tell and it's time to tell it.

I have the best job in the world. I get to be good news, tell good news, and teach good news everyday, everywhere I go — but it's not just my job. It's my life. If God told me I couldn't do evangelism anymore, I would want Him to take me home, because nothing else will fill you with passion, joy and expectancy like sharing the good news of Christ. It's just flat-out fun.

I met Dennis just a few weeks ago. Some friendships take months to form but if we will care about people and listen to them, other friendships will form instantly. Dennis sat by me on a flight from Atlanta to Nashville. He was a soldier on his way home from Iraq. God gave us an immediate bond because I work with chaplains at the North American Mission Board.

I just asked Dennis if he had ever talked to a chaplain. He said, "No, but I sure need one." I told him God must have put me there to be his chaplain. He shared with me his guilt over having killed so many combatants in Iraq. He held up his

hands and said, "These hands are covered in blood. How could God ever forgive me?" He was amazed when I told him that Exodus 15:3 says that "the Lord is a warrior," and that he was protecting my family and had nothing to be of which to be ashamed.

When I told him the good news that God would meet his real need and give him a new life, he immediately received Christ just as we landed!

Do you know what it is like to watch a soldier reunite with his family and then tell his wife that he had just prayed to receive Christ? It was amazing. I called my wife while I watched him embrace his family, told her the story and said, "Honey, it doesn't get much better than this!"

It's time for you to get in on the fun. Make a friend. Tell him your story. Tell him God's story. It's time to make evangelism good news again.

Avant is vice-president of evangelization at the North American Mission Board. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Senator to support marriage amendment

LINCOLN, Neb. (BP and local reports) — A federal judge's ruling in May striking down Nebraska's marriage amendment has persuaded one of that state's U.S. senators, Democrat Ben Nelson, to support a marriage amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Focus on the Family issued a statement June 10 saying Nelson had told the organization he now supports a marriage amendment. Nelson spokesman David DiMartino subsequently confirmed to Baptist Press that the senator does indeed support an amendment.

As late as last summer, Nelson said he opposed an amendment, believing it was best to leave the issue of gay marriage up to the states. Now, Nelson's support gives marriage amendment sponsors a critical Democratic ally.

"His position has always been that he thinks marriage should be regulated by the states, and that he would support a federal effort to amend the Constitution only if a federal court overruled a state law," DiMartino told BP, "and that has now happened."

In May U.S. District Judge Joseph Bataillon overturned Nebraska's marriage amendment, ruling it was discriminatory and made homosexuals "unequal." The amendment bans both gay marriage and Vermont-style civil unions. The ruling is being appealed.

Focus on the Family's James Dobson applauded Nelson's support. "Senator Nelson is to be commended for reevaluating his position on the need for the Marriage Protection Amendment (MPA) to the U.S.



Constitution in light of Judge Bataillon's incomprehensible ruling," Dobson said in a statement. "The senator now joins millions of Americans who recognize the threat posed by arrogant and activist judges who would deprive the people of their right to govern themselves. We look forward to working with Sen. Nelson to pass the MPA in the months ahead."

Focus on the Family said Nelson had pledged to support an amendment in both a telephone call and a follow-up letter.

Last summer a federal marriage amendment was blocked from receiving an up-or-down vote in the Senate. Needing 60 votes to cut off debate, it got 48 votes. Although Nelson

was one of those 48 senators who supported limiting debate, he apparently was prepared to vote against the amendment itself.

In February 2004 he told the Associated Press: "The states should decide whether to ban same-sex marriages... I fail to see where this has reached national proportions where a federal constitutional amendment is necessary."

Asked whether Nelson would sign on as a co-sponsor of the amendment, DiMartino said, "He's going to support the effort whenever it comes up."

Nebraska's amendment is not the only one being challenged in federal court. A federal lawsuit was filed June 8 against Michigan's marriage amendment. Oklahoma's amendment also is being challenged in federal court.

Mississippi voters overwhelmingly approved a similar marriage amendment in November 2003, amid rumblings from some opposition groups that the amendment would be challenged in court. To date, no challenge has been filed but supporters worry that successful challenges in other states like Nebraska

THE BAPTIST Record

may have an impact on the Mississippi amendment.

Bataillon's ruling in the Nebraska marked the first time a marriage amendment had been overturned. Including Nebraska, 18 states have adopted such amendments by an average margin of 70-30%.

Amendments to the U.S. Constitution cannot be overturned in court. Amendments to the U.S. Constitution require the support of two-thirds of the U.S. House and U.S. Senate, and three-fourths of the 50 states' legislatures.

The marriage amendment in the U.S. Senate is Senate Joint Resolution 1 and in the House is House Joint Resolution 39.

For more information about the national debate over "gay marriage," visit <http://www.bpnews.net/same-sexmarriage>



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FRONT PAGE

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Gay marriage loses

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (BP) — An historic vote to legalize gay marriage in California ended in a surprising loss for homosexual activists June 2, giving social conservatives a rare victory in the state legislature. The California Assembly defeated a gay marriage bill on June 2 for the third time in two days, preventing the assembly from becoming the first legislative body in the United States to pass such a proposal. Needing 41 votes, it received support from only 37 members. Thirty-six opposed it. In two earlier votes, the bill had fallen six votes short on identical 35-37 votes. In the months leading up to the vote the bill's sponsor, along with the assembly speaker, had expressed optimism that it would pass but in the end, opposition from a handful of Democrats doomed the bill. Nevertheless, it was an historical vote. No legislative body in the U.S. had ever voted on a bill legalizing gay marriage. Opponents said the bill violates both the will of the people and the California constitution. In 2000, California voters passed an initiative — Proposition 22 — explicitly banning gay marriage by a margin of 61-39%. The state constitution prohibits the legislature from overriding a voter-backed initiative. Glen Lavy, an attorney with the pro-family legal group Alliance Defense Fund, called the loss for homosexual activists significant. "This defeat shows that even the homosexual-friendly California assembly is not willing to go so far as to redefine marriage," Lavy told Baptist Press. The votes were mostly along party lines, with Republicans opposing it and Democrats supporting it. On the final vote, however, five Democrats opposed it and another six Democrats abstained, keeping it from passing. All the "yes" votes came from Democrats. No Republican supported the bill. Homosexual activists vowed to try again next year, but their best opportunity may be in state court where a lawsuit seeking the legalization of gay marriage is making its way up the system. Gay marriage supporters won on the trial court level, although that ruling is being appealed.

Looking back

10 years ago

Voting overwhelmingly to ask forgiveness for racism from African-Americans, messengers to the sesquicentennial meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention apologize for condoning or perpetuating racism toward blacks.

20 years ago

First Church, Pontotoc, honors over 50 people who have held church membership there for more than 50 years — including 98-year-old Estelle Furr, a member since 1900 and children's Sunday School teacher for almost 50 years.

50 years ago

Two thousand people are expected to attend the State Training Union Convention at First Church, Jackson, according to Kermit King, state Training Union secretary.

FOLLOWING GOD'S DIRECTIONS

It is not always easy to find the will of God. The path that He has for us to travel is not always clear. At times we just do not know what He would have us to do. At other times we do not want to know what He wants us to do because we know we don't really want to do it.

It may be that the most profound and, at the same time the simplest direction that the Lord ever gave us, is found in two words: "Follow me." Sprinkled throughout the Gospel accounts, Jesus' relationship with the disciples is found in those two pointed and powerful words: "Follow me."

John closes out his Gospel about Jesus by telling us of an incident that took place with Peter, Jesus, and John. I can just see Peter glancing over at John and then saying to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" The disciples were so human, so like us, and yet separated from us by 20 centuries. Jesus made it clear that what John did was not the issue when He responded to Peter and said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You follow me" (John 21:21-22). There are some valuable lessons for us to learn from this account.

There seems to be a note of irritability on the part of Peter as Jesus tells him what to do. Peter seems to be indicating that the Lord needed to take more of a personal interest and more of a hands-on-management style to make sure John was doing what he ought to be doing. We worry about what other folks are doing or not



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

doing, and we can get worked up in a frenzy if we think God is not making the other fellow live up to his end of the bargain, carry his end of the load, and work as hard as we do.

Unlike any other creation of God, people are funny like this. If we detect that somebody is not doing all that we think the person ought to do be doing, we respond in one of two ways (or possibly both ways). We get upset because the Lord doesn't do His part in making the person tow the line and we tend to want to quit working ourselves. If they are not going to work, we are not!

Some years ago I had two pear trees in my backyard. One year one of the trees was loaded down with pears and the other tree only had a couple of pears. The following spring and summer, the tree that had produced so many pears now had zero pears and the other tree had a couple. I thought maybe the frost had gotten the pears or maybe the tree was too dry, so I just asked the pear tree what was the matter. Do you know what that tree told me? He said he wasn't about to stand around there in the backyard and do all of the work while the other pear tree did virtually nothing, and he just

quit. Now while the pear production on the two trees in my backyard actually happened, you know the conversation was fictitious because pear trees don't care what the other trees are doing. They are always going to do their best. Only people are capable of getting irritated because we figure we are doing too much.

A second truth that I noticed has to do with responsibility. The Lord said, "Peter, what you need to do is just follow me — follow directions." Certainly there is a trust factor involved in what the Lord is asking us to do. He says, "Follow me." He doesn't give us all of the answers about where He is going, how He is going to take care of every challenge that may be down the road, or where all of the resources for our journey will come from He just says, "Follow me."

Oftentimes, the Lord leads us in a direction and in a way that doesn't seem right, but it is. In the early part of 2001, I heard an announcement on the radio that the Natchez Trace was going to be closed at the bridge entrance on Interstate 55. I didn't know or hear how you would get on the Trace or how the traffic would be re-routed. Late one night I was

coming in to Jackson on the Trace and I began to follow the signs guiding me through the detour route. I just paid attention to the signs, and the sign to put me on the Natchez Trace going south actually took me north. At first I thought that someone had messed up. The directions took me north, over a bridge going to the west, then back down on a ramp going south. As I drove through the construction site following the directions, I thought of that old statement that says, "God hits straight licks with crooked sticks." He can take our winding paths and make sense out of them if we will simply do what He has asked us to do: "Follow me."

One final thought that jumps out at me has to do with irresponsibility. The supreme request of our Lord is "Follow me," but we spend so much of our time trying to figure out the place we ought to serve or analyzing our super-giftedness in order to make sure that we get to what we think is an influential spot. Jesus says, "You are not going to do anything more significant or more effective than when you are following me."

It is rather irresponsible on our part to think that we know more, see further, and have better insights than the sovereign Lord of the universe does. You will not miss the way, fail in your efforts, be disappointed, or get lost in a maze of misery as long as you do what He says. The Lord says, "Follow me."

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YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

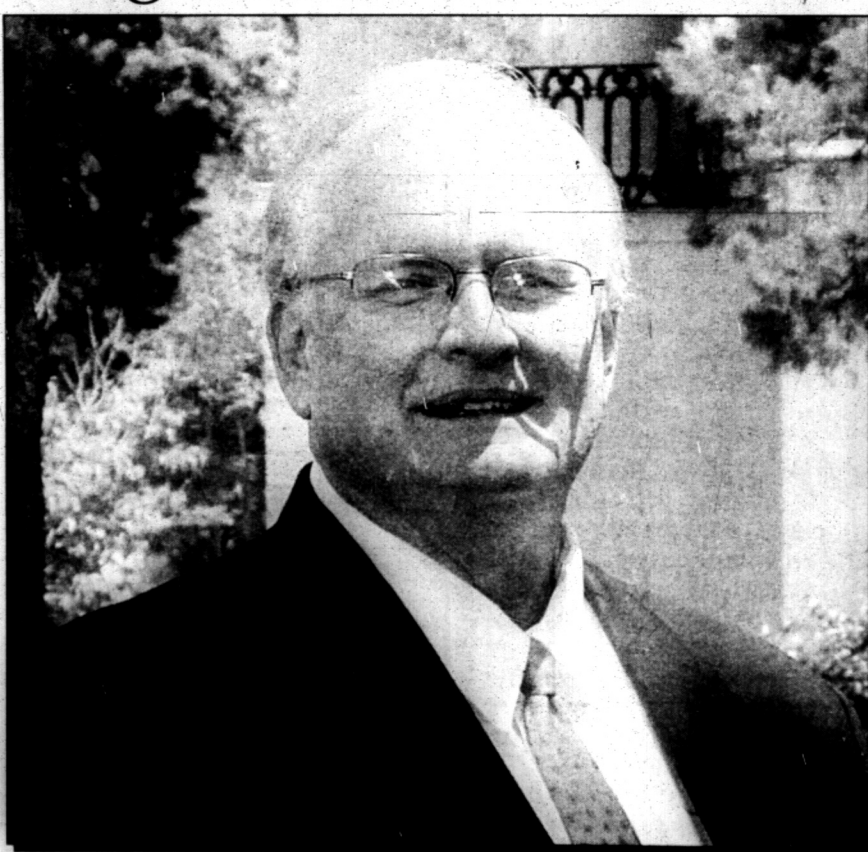
If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

VanHorn moving to MC as Christian Studies chair

CLINTON, Ms. (Special) — Wayne VanHorn is the new chair of the Christian Studies Department at Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton effective June 1, according to MC President Lee Royce. VanHorn comes to MC from the pastorate of First Church, Columbia, and replaces Harold Bryson, who is leaving MC to pursue writing, preaching across the country, and teaching at Carson Newman College in Jefferson City, Tn.

"I am very pleased that Wayne VanHorn will be joining us at Mississippi College to lead the Department of Christian Studies. He will bring to Mississippi College a fine combination of skills, academic and pastoral experience, and spiritual maturity that will benefit us greatly as we seek to serve our students, the Mississippi Baptist Convention, and the Lord Jesus Christ," Royce said.

"My philosophy of education could be summed up in the phrase, 'guided self-discovery,'" VanHorn said, "and my philosophy of administration could be summed up in the phrase, 'effectual teamwork.'"



VanHorn

VanHorn has served as an adjunct faculty member teaching New Testament at Baptist-affiliated William Carey College in Hattiesburg, adjunct faculty

member teaching Old Testament at MC, and adjunct faculty member at New Orleans Seminary.

He received a bachelor of arts degree in 1980 from Christopher

Newport College of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va.; a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary in 1983; and a doctor of theology degree from New Orleans Seminary in 1987. VanHorn has also completed four seminars toward a doctorate in church history and theology.

He has served in a number of denominational leadership positions, including president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in 2001-02; member of the Southern Baptist Convention Committee on Committees in 2004; member of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) Committee on Committees from 1999-present; and both the MBC budget and program committees for a number of years.

Van Horn has written numerous books, articles, commentaries, and book reviews, including Sunday School lessons and commentary for The Baptist Record. While serving as pastor in Columbia, he wrote regularly for the Columbian-Progress newspaper. He is married to the former Terri Leigh Ullrich, and they have three children and two grandchildren.

FORGET 'ISMS'

Editor:

This letter is in regard to Pastor Joey Barnard's "So be it" comment in Letters to the Editor (May 28 issue). My maternal grandmother always ran us away from her chicken coop because the noise and screaming associated with children playing kept her hens from laying eggs. The same is true with pastors playing with conservatism, fundamentalism, or other such "isms" where you can call someone unto account for some perceived wrongdoing and make churchgoing seem like a wrestling match instead of something Holy and desirable — like worship. We stop making converts when we get distracted from what is truly important.

The main problem with Pastor Barnard's comment is that he ignores the fact that Jesus Christ gave us our marching orders and stated that we are to make believers and baptize them. The fact that it was the last order given to his disciples should make it of utmost importance to His pastors today.

When pastors stop playing with "isms" and return to making church "Holy" again, people will come back to church, start believing in our Lord, and then we will see baptisms rise again!

Edward Williamson
Canon City, Co.

BAPTISM COMMANDED

Editor:

I read the letter from Pastor Joey Barnard (So Be It, May 26 issue) several times, and I may not have understood what the writer attempted to present concerning baptism and counting baptisms.

We can't get around the fact that baptism is a church ordinance. Jesus gave this command to the church. Keeping a record of baptisms is a way to check the outreach of the church in reaching the lost. When a lost one is saved and baptized, the record shows this (one convert, one baptism).

Acts 2:38, 41, tells us that Peter preached at Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized." They that received his word were baptized. There were added unto them 3,000 souls. This is on the record.

Acts 18:8 tells that Crispis and his house and many others who heard the word believed and were baptized. This is on the record.

Acts 19:5 tells us that 12 were saved at Ephesus and were baptized. This is on the record.

Acts 8:35-39 tells us that Philip preached Jesus to and baptized the eunuch.

Christian baptism symbolizes the redemptive work of Christ. It symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It also typifies the Christian's death to his old life, its burial, and his resurrection to walk in the newness of life in Christ.

Baptism is not necessary for salvation. Jesus commissioned the New Testament church to baptize believers. Baptism is a definite obligation of every Christian. Baptism is not only a church ordinance, but a church responsibility.

James K. Burke
Clara

WATCH RED FLAGS

Editor:

Much ado has been and is being made of Rick Warren's books and the activities that are based upon them in thousands of churches. The fact that churches and pastors from liberal to conservative have embraced his works without question should be a red flag to any fundamentalist.

The fact that the controlled, anti-Christian major media would give much attention to Warren and his movement should also be a red flag. Another red flag should be seen in Warren hiring a New Age guru/mystic, Ken Blanchard, to help training efforts at Warren's church.

Error is recognized by knowing truth, not by studying error. Understanding and discernment are tied to obedience (Ps. 111:10; 119:100), which includes studying and rightly dividing

the Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Also see 1 Tim. 4:1,6; 2 Tim. 4:2-5, KJV.

Rather than being hailed as a great spiritual movement that is positive and the like, the attention to and the following of Warren by many (who also believe that they are following Scripture in the truest sense) should be regarded as a sign of the end times. His movement is just another example of falling away from the Word, which will be realized too late — if at all — by most believers. For those who would like to get a quick start or a short course on the deceptions and more in Warren's books, they should read Deceived on Purpose by Warren Smith, and Who's Driving The Purpose-Driven Church? by James Sundquist.

Paul E. Hadinger
Batesville

RECALLING GOOD TIMES

Editor:

What joy! What blessing! What love! All these and much, much more were experienced by so many people gathered at the corner of Broad and Court Streets in West Point to celebrate the 150th anniversary of First Church.

People came from far and near remembering former days and times of refreshment and revival from the Lord. There was a sweetness unparalleled in the midst of all the greetings, laughter, and recollections as we assembled to worship the Lord and give Him praise for His faithfulness unto His people. The theme was, 150 years of God's Amazing Grace and Faithfulness, based upon 1 Timothy 1:14.

The messages brought by former pastors on June 4-5 were inspiring and enriching for all who attended. The praiseful singing was unsurpassed, led by former choir directors. Loving hearts of members resulted in their willingness to prepare a banquet fit for a king which was enjoyed by the mass of attendees after Sunday morning worship time.

How grateful we are for the privilege and honor of being those who grew up attending Sunday School and preaching services in the bygone years at First Church of West Point. The memories of those times are worth more than gold or silver. Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before and I love Him more and more.

Carlene Proctor Dodson
Columbus

DESERVE MILLSTONE?

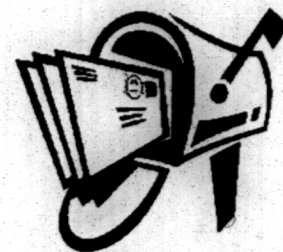
Editor:

I read the Guest Opinion by Gene Gillis (Don't lead children down path to hell, May 26 issue) with great interest, and I certainly agree with his sentiment. I feel that coaches should not schedule practices or games on the Lord's Day for all of the same scriptural reasons Gillis listed. However, I do think that the parents bear the greater responsibility. After all, if no parents showed up with their children on Sundays, the lonely coaches would have to go home.

I'd like to make another point here, too, if I may. Jesus said the main thing is that we are to love the Lord and our neighbors. I know a lot of people never take their kids to play sports instead of going to church, but they leave church and head to the restaurants. I wonder if they ever ask their waitress, "So, did your kids get to go to church today since you had to be at work serving me?" Are we pious church-goers deserving of the millstone, too? Is our god our belly? (Philippians 3:19) I'm not in any hurry to throw stones; however, since I know all too well that even though I don't skip church for ball games or eat out on Sundays, I have other sins.

As Christians, all our decisions should be based on, number one, does this show that I love God, or number two, does this show that I love my fellow man? I think it's time we made different choices about a lot of things.

Carolyn Ellis
Clinton



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

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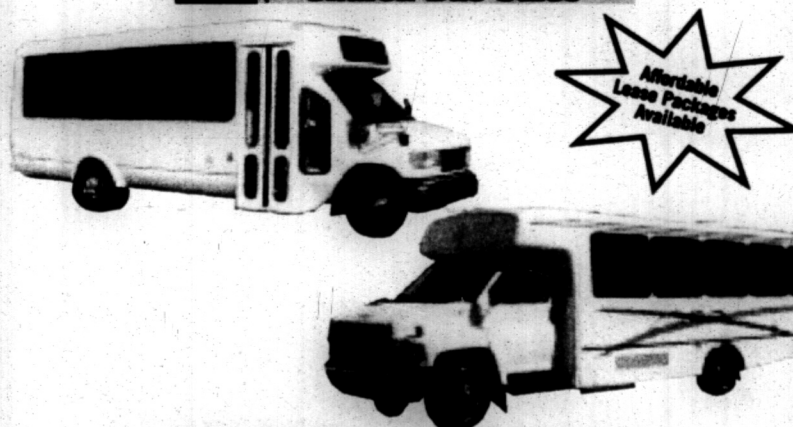


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JUST FOR THE RECORD

STAFF CHANGES



Wolfe

Edwards Church, Edwards, has called Joey Wolfe as minister of music.

Dewayne Jeffries has been employed by First Church, Starkville, as interim church administrator, effective June 6; and Stan Wallace has resigned as Minister of Music and Worship, effective June 5.

Da Vinci Code Workshop on MBTS web site

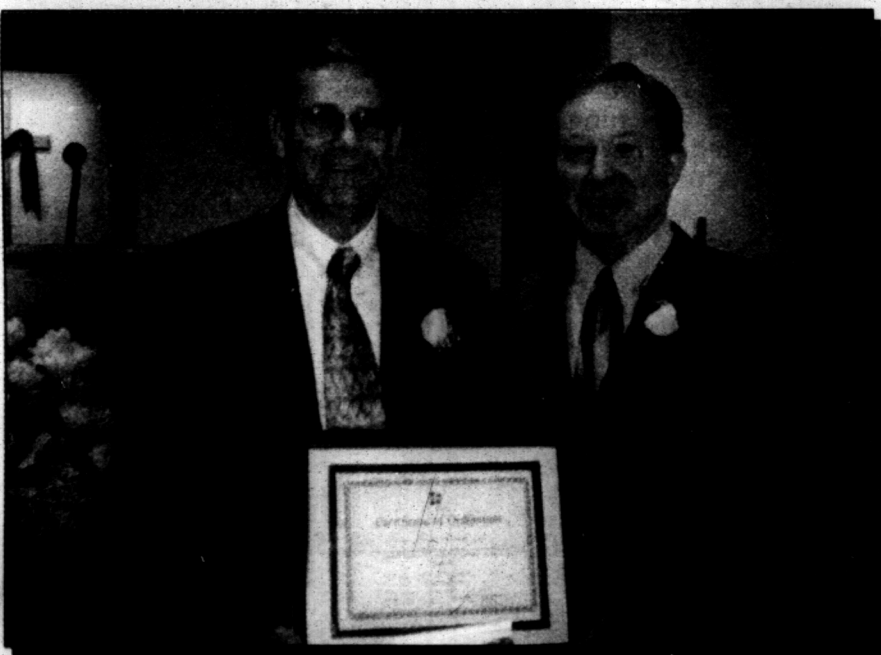
KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP) — Audio recordings of the recent The Da Vinci Code Workshop at Midwestern Seminary (MBTS) have been posted to the seminary's website. The March 21-22 conference at the Kansas City, Mo., campus was organized to help equip Christians to respond to the best-selling book, which claims that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and promotes the Gnostic gospels — writings which were not included in the canon of Scripture. All 10 sessions of the two-day workshop are available online. The link at Midwestern's website is http://www.mbts.edu/Resource/s/workshop_davincicode.htm.



1. Bible Drill Teams, Drew Church, Drew



2. GAs and Acteens, First Church, Olive Branch



3. Deacon Ordination, Bethany Church, Potts Camp



4. Christian Ministry, Wade Church, Moss Point

1. Drew Church, Drew, recognized its two Bible drill teams. Children's Bible drill team members (front) were Matt McCool, John Paul Phillips, Kaci Mosco, and Kayla Burchfield. Youth Bible Drill Team (rear) were Tim Melton, Joseph Cummins, Anna Melton, Jenny Thorn, and Tiffany Putnam.

2. The GAs and Acteens at First Church, Olive Branch, had their annual recognition and mission service on May 15. GAs were presented with their sashes and badges for their achievements throughout the year, and Acteens were presented crowns and scepters for completing their level of MissionQuest.

3. Joe Reed Clayton was ordained as deacon on April 17 at Bethany Church, Potts Camp. Presenting Clayton with his certificate is Pastor Donald Worsham.

4. Six young ladies from Wade Church, Moss Point, have surrendered to Christian service. Shown, from left, are Lindsay Beck, Jessica Pedersen, Amanda Wood, Amanda Jones, Erika Stanford, and Amanda Smith.

5. Corinth Church, Philadelphia, needs immediate volunteers to replace roof of the church. Call the church secretary at (601) 656-6912.

6. Cherry Creek Church, Pontotoc Association, congratulates their children and youth Bible drillers.

7. Sardis Lake Church, Sardis, recently held a picnic on May 15 for the youth before a trip to Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian, June 7-11.

8. The Diamond family will be in concert at Maybank Church, Hattiesburg, on Sun., July 3, 6:00 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Call (601) 545-9251.

9. East End Church, Columbus, sponsors the eleventh annual Let Freedom Ring patriotic celebration at Heritage Academy High School on Sat., June 25, 7:00 p.m. and Sun., June 26, 4:00 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, contact Gary Walker at (662) 328-5915.

10. New Hope Church, Foxworth, is hosting Rick Webb as the Roman centurion in the drama, My Day with the Master, on June 26, 11 a.m. Tim Parker, pastor.



6. Bible Drillers, Cherry Creek Church, Pontotoc Association



7. Youth Picnic, Sardis Lake Church, Sardis

JUST FOR THE RECORD

11. **Plainway Church, Laurel**, recently held homecoming services. Shown are J. Nonnie Jefcoat, pastor, and former pastors, Harold C. Ishee, and Kent Megehee.

12. **Bayou Talla Fellowship Church, Kiln**, is hosting the 4th annual I Love America Celebration and Bar-B-Q Cook-off on July 3, planned to raise funds for needs in the community. Morning services are at 10 a.m. with the cook-off beginning at 6 p.m. Inflatables, rides, dunking booths, games, and fireworks will be provided. Call (228) 255-1118 for information.

13. **Dumas Church, Dumas**, held a Baby Dedication Service May 8. Pastor Scott Hudson conducted the service for 15 babies and children and their parents.

14. **First Church, Saltillo**, held a year end party for the preschool choir. Shown are Karen Mathis, leader; Tanner Mears, Abigail Mears, Alexis Littrell, Abbie Katherine Smith, Chloe DeVaughn, and Nikki Pittman, leader.

15. **South McComb Church, McComb**, recognizes its

Bible drillers. Front row: Zak McDaniel, Justin Hudson, Ryan Regan, Bailee Fleming, Luther Bullock, and Isaac Bowlin; back row: Leah Bowlin, Savannah Newton, Maddison Smith, Noah Bowlin, and Tanner Whittington.

16. **Oakdale Church, Brandon**, recognizes its Bible drillers. Shown are Evelyn Houston, director; Kayleigh Downey, Andrew Hudson, Elizabeth Rodgers, Andrew Greer, and Michael McKnight.

17. **Progress Church, McComb**, held homecoming services June 5 marking 77 years as a church, with 108 present. Shown are Billy Simmons, pastor, and Wanda Henry, a charter member of the church.



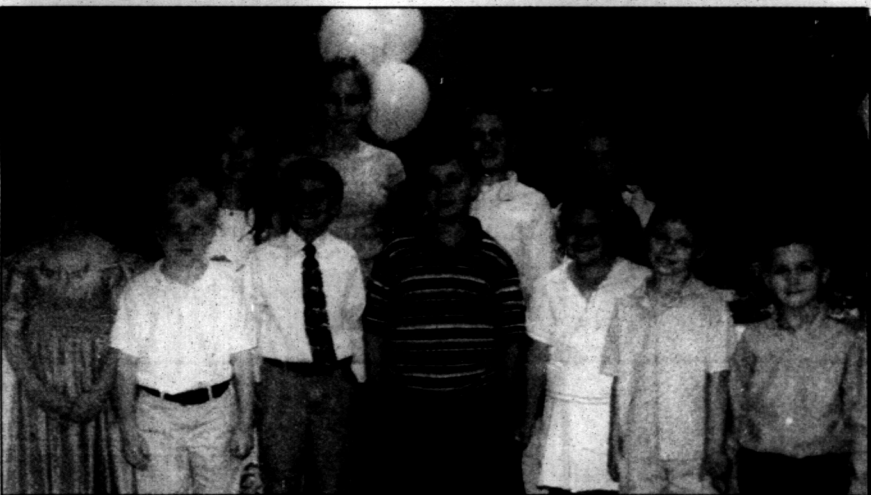
MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS



11. Homecoming Services, Plainway Church, Laurel



13. Baby Dedication, Dumas Church, Dumas



15. Bible Drillers, South McComb Church, McComb



14. Preschool Choir Party, First Church, Saltillo



17. Homecoming Celebration, Progress Church, McComb



16. Bible Drillers, Oakdale Church, Brandon

REVIVALS & HOMECOMINGS

Troy First Church, Pontotoc Association: Homecoming, June 26, 10:30 a.m. followed by covered dish lunch. Grant Stegall, First Church, Crystal Springs, preaching; Greg Herndon, host pastor.

Corinth Church, Heidelberg: Homecoming and Revival, July 17-20; Sun., 10 a.m. with lunch following; Sun.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Jim Pender, speaking; Kevin Bishop, music; Bill Riley, pastor.


Murphy Creek Church, Louisville: Revival, June 26-29; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Charles Smith, evangelist; Sean Greer, music; Walter Simmons, pastor.

Salem Church, Carthage: Homecoming, June 26, 11 a.m., and Revival, June 27-July 1, 7 p.m. Evangelist, Randall Creel; Jerry Poole, pastor.

New Hope Church, Tupelo: Revival, June 12-15; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m. P. J. Scott, preaching; Jeff Chamblee, music; Lowell Johnson, pastor.

Pleasant Grove Church, Gore Springs: Revival, June 19-24; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m. Different speaker each night; Neil Gant, pastor.

First Church, Marion: Homecoming, June 26; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m., followed by worship and covered dish lunch; Bill Webb, guest speaker; Steve Jordan, pastor.



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EVIDRV EVXM WZR ZCEI
VXAA, EVXCSX FVTAA
BZCX VTCW ETQX EVXB;
EVIDRV EVXM SAZBU DG
EI VXTJXC, EVXCSX KZAA
Z UOZCR EVXB WIKC.

TBIF CZCX: EKI

Clue: B = M

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark Two: Twenty.

1. Mary Dean Hollis, **Blue Mountain College (BMC)** National Alumnae Association (NAA) historian for the past 50 years, was recently honored by the NAA for her service in preserving the history of BMC and her role as curator of the May Garner Black Alumnae Room. Kathy Voyles, NAA president, announced that the Association's historical doll collection, containing over 130 dolls dating from the 1800s to the present, was being named the Mary Dean Hollis Historical Doll Collection of Blue Mountain College.

2. **Mississippi College (MC)** alumni and friends are invited to attend the annual ice cream fellowship at the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, Tenn., June 21, 7-10 p.m., Nashville Convention Center, Level One, room 111. For more information, call the MC Alumni Office at (601) 925-3228.

3. **William Carey College (WCC)** will host an alumni luncheon June 21, 12:15 p.m. at the Renaissance Hotel, Nashville, Tenn., room 2, level 3, during the Southern Baptist Convention. Cost is \$20; for more information or reservations, call Donna Wheeler at (800) 962-5991, ext. 167.

4. The **WCC Alumni Association** invites Carey

alumni and friends of the college to an Atlanta Braves game July 9. The tour leaves the Hattiesburg campus 7:30 a.m. and includes stops at Moundville State Park and Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield. The tour returns to Hattiesburg July 10. For cost, reservations, and other information, call (601) 318-6167 or (800) 962-5991, ext. 167.

5. **New Orleans Seminary** will hold graduate level classes at MC and undergraduate courses at Broadmoor Church, Madison. Classes begin Aug. 22. All students who have not participated in New Student Orientation are required to attend Aug. 15 at 3 p.m. at MC and 2 p.m. at Broadmoor. Returning students must register online by July 25; new students must complete and send all paperwork to NOBTS Registrar's Office, 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70126. For information on graduate courses, including cost and schedule, contact Eric Pratt, program director, at (601) 925-3235 or e-mail at epratt@mc.edu. For information on undergraduate courses, contact Julius Thompson, program director, at (601) 856-4341 or by e-mail at Thompson.Julius@world-net.att.net.



1. Mary Dean Hollis Historical Doll Collection, BMC

VBS

Big Level Church, Wiggins: June 27-July 1, 6:00-9:00 p.m. Children age 4-sixth grade. For additional information, call (601) 528-9412.

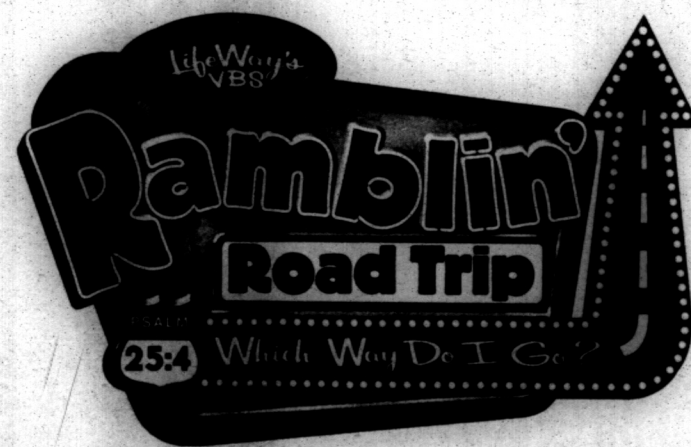
First Church, Crystal Springs: The Kingdom of the Son, A Prayer Safari, June 20-24, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.; preschool-6th grade; call (601) 892-1149 for information.

Cairo Church, Ecu: Ramblin' Road Trip, June 19-24, 6 p.m.-9 p.m., for

preschool-adult. William G. Dowdy, pastor.

Moorhead Church, Moorhead: June 20-24, 6 p.m.-8:30 p.m.; 3 years-6th grade; Larry W. Haggard, pastor.

Mt. Horeb Church, Meridian: Ramblin' Road Trip; registration, June 11, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; June 19-24, 6:30 p.m.-9 p.m. Liz Creighton, VBS director; Nick Holden, pastor; call (601) 693-3085 for more information.



MS POSITIONS

PART-TIME COOK needed to prepare Wednesday night fellowship meals. Send resume to Hillcrest Baptist Church, 5950 Terry Road, Byram, MS 39272, or call (601) 372-0132.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF YOUTH/ASSOCIATE PASTOR: Heucks Retreat Baptist Church, Brookhaven, Miss., seeking a full-time minister of youth/associate pastor. Please send resumes and references to Heucks Retreat Baptist Church, 2167 Heucks Retreat Rd., NE, Brookhaven, MS 39601, attn: chairman, personnel committee.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES: Brandon Baptist Church. Director responsible

for birth through sixth grade activities and ministry. Requirements include four-year college degree, organization and ministry experience. Send resume to BBC, 104 Courtyard, Brandon, MS 39042, attn: Tommie Lou Ball, search committee.

YOUTH MINISTER: Brandon Baptist Church. Minister will be responsible for seventh grade through college activities and ministry. Requirements include four-year college degree, seminary degree desired, organization skills and not less than two (2) years experience in youth ministry. Send resume to BBC, 104 Courtyard, Brandon, MS 39042, attn: Tommie Lou Ball, search committee.

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MINISTER OF STUDENTS/RECREATION — responsible for approx. 100 students. Sixth grade-college/coordinating recreation activities. Four year degree/seminary preferred. Must have a passion for soul-winning and discipleship of students. Send resumes to FBC Mt. Olive, 3200 Mt Olive Rd, Mt.Olive, AL 35117, attn: D. Alford or huguley-family@bellsouth.net.

GROWING SUBURBAN CHURCH with 500+ in Sunday school searching for minister of discipleship/outreach. Send resume to search committee, First Baptist Church, 3223 N. Gallagher Road, Dover, Florida 33527.

ARKANSAS BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES (ABC Homes), is seeking house parent couples for its home for children in Monticello and at its boys ranch near Harrison. Contact Randy Luper in Monticello at (870) 367-5358 (rluper@abchomes.org) or Bill Vonder-Mehden in Harrison at (870) 741-5784 (bvondermehden@abchomes.org). ABC Homes is an agency of the AR Baptist State Convention and is compliant with Section 504 of the Rehab Act of 1973.

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A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN ACTION COMMISSION OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION • VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 4

Since you asked...



By Jimmy Porter

Front page... *Clarion Ledger*, June 9, 2005 — "Judge denies Killen trial delay." Edgar Ray Killen is scheduled to go on trial for the

June 21, 1964 slayings of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman. Once again, Mississippi race relations are in the national spotlight.

I graduated from Philadelphia High School in 1963 and pastored churches in Neshoba County from 1963 to 1970. I watched federal marshals and others search fields and remote places for the bodies of the three slain civil rights workers. I, along with others, felt the tension and sensed the fear that had a strangle hold on the majority of the people. As with most, I was in total shock that such hatred could exist in our town.

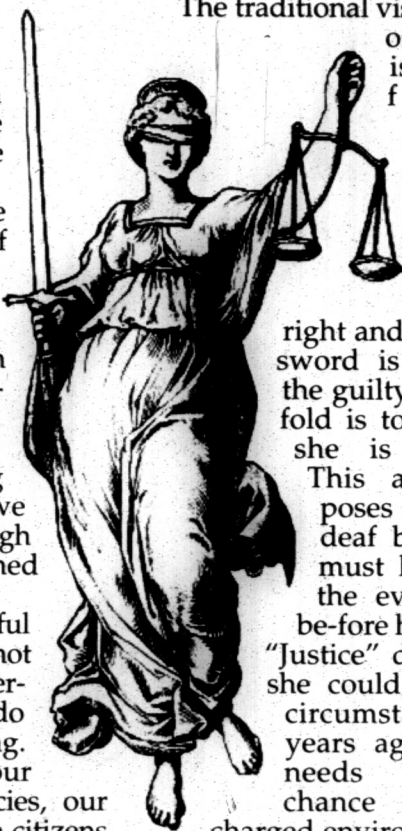
In recent months I have been asked often, "How do you feel about the trial?" "Should it be happening?" "What good will

it do to drag up old feelings, etc.?" "Can't we just let it go away?" What follows is an honest attempt to come to grips with all these questions.

First, I do not believe there are "statutes of limitations" placed on biblical mandates. There are no God-given time restraints on forgiveness, reconciliation, and peacemaking. God does not have a time clock on making wrongs as right as we possibly can, even though the murders happened over 40 years ago.

Second, I am thankful God gives to each of us not only second but numerous opportunities to do the proper thing. Therefore, I believe our law enforcement agencies, our judicial system, and the citizens of Mississippi deserve an opportunity to review the situation in a calmer, saner atmosphere.

The traditional visual symbol of "Justice" is a blindfolded woman holding scales and a sword. The scales are for weighing



right and wrong; the sword is to punish the guilty; the blindfold is to show that she is impartial.

This all presupposes she is not deaf because she must listen to all the evidence put before her. Perhaps "Justice" did the best she could under the circumstances 40 years ago, but she needs another chance in a less charged environment.

The third thing I've learned by experience is that pain often precedes healing. Once I stepped

on broken glass and unknowingly a piece lodged in my foot. For a couple of weeks it appeared to get well but one misstep and it would start bleeding again. When a doctor finally removed the glass, my foot healed completely. It was painful getting the glass out, but it paved the way for the cure.

This trial will be painful to all the involved families and their descendants, but my prayer is that it will help the healing process and bring all of us to a point to where we can move forward together. No, it is not going to be a magic cure for all our racial problems, but it will help some of us. In no way would I dare presume the guilt or innocence of Mr. Killen. That is up to the courts to decide, and we must live with their decision. But we don't have to continue living with the racism and prejudices of the past. We can choose to do better.

According to Ed Deuschle, Director of Church Planting, there are 76 different people groups in Mississippi. ©Anglo

churches are planting African American and Hispanic churches and sharing facilities with other groups. Our churches are joining with different people groups to "go on mission." Sometimes it is across town and sometimes it is across the ocean. Deuschle states that each Sunday Mississippi Baptist congregations worship in nine different languages. Yes, it is a new day, and I am excited about our future.

Mississippi is truly multicultural and multiethnic, and it becomes our responsibility to bring our world to Christ, thus overcoming social, racial, economic and language barriers. Apostle Paul said it best, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," (Galatians 3:28). May we do all we can to become one in Christ, even if it means revisiting our past and dealing with it.

Porter is executive director-treasurer of the Christian Action Commission. He can be reached at jporter@christianaction.com.

JUST FOR THE RECORD

18. Big Springs Church, Brookhaven, held a special service to dedicate their recently completed baptistery. Shown are some of the church members who participated in the event.

19. Big Springs Church, Brookhaven, held a special service to honor their Sunday School teachers and long-time Sunday School members. Those with plaques are the oldest Sunday School members and those with certificates are Sunday School teachers.

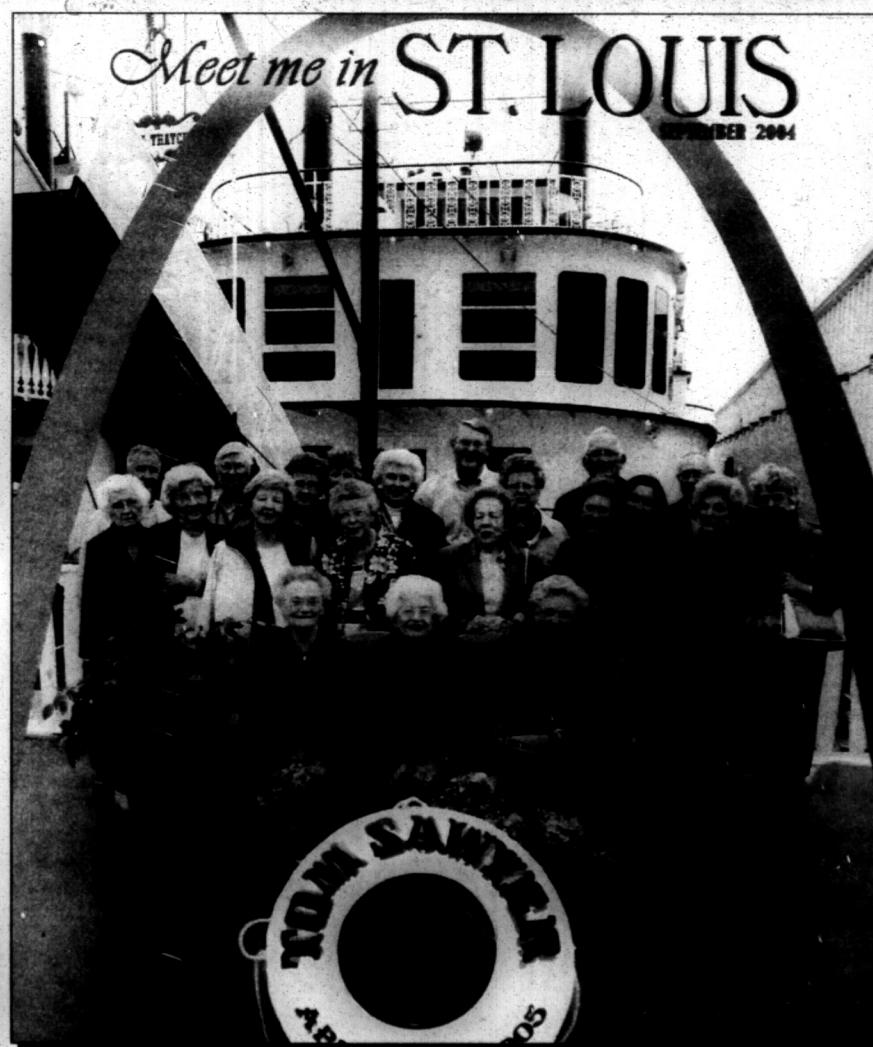
20. The senior adults from Ridgecrest Church, Madison, attended the Celebrate Life Conference in St. Louis, Mo., April 24-25. Shown are the participants.



18. Baptistry Dedication, Big Springs Church, Brookhaven



19. Sunday School Honorees, Big Springs Church, Brookhaven



20. Senior Adult Trip, Ridgecrest Church, Madison



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THE VILLAGE VIEW



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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of *The Village View* is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

May 26-June 12

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Mrs. Frances S. Kemp
Harry & Carol Bryan
Bud & Gloria Hendrix
Mr. & Mrs. Charlie Carlisle
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Hazel Garrett
David Robert Doerksen
Glenda Walls Fry
Glenn Doerksen
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Rachel Leigh Doerksen
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Glenda Walls Fry
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Dr. Lee F. Mason
Kim Jennings
Sara Ward
Mary Johnson
Mr. & Mrs. Aubrey L. Hays
Mary Alice Jones
Glenda Walls Fry
Opal B. Jones
Glenda Walls Fry
Dr. Joe Lovelady
Sanctuary Class, N Oxford BC
Patsy McElroy
Glenda Walls Fry
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Ms. Hattie Mae Johnson
Ramon & Paulette Prescott
Lindsay & Emma Lampton
& Family
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Glenda Walls Fry
Marsha Buchanan Schaller
Glenda Walls Fry
Tallie R. Seighman
Dr. Lee F. Mason
Sara Tuggle
Glenda Walls Fry

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Get Growing

Philippians 2:12-16a; 3:10-19

By Rhoda Royce

Mississippi College basketball brightens every winter for me. I marvel at the feats the players accomplish. How can they sink those shots — often while running and while dodging opponents who are trying to stop them? Observing a practice answers that question, at least partially. Strenuous daily efforts enable the players to make the moves that sometimes look effortless at the games, and each team member must keep growing as a player for the whole team to earn a reputation as winners.

In his epistle to the Philippian Christians, the apostle Paul provided some elements of a training plan for Christian development and reminded those Christians, and us, why we must keep growing as Christians, no matter how long we've been "on

the floor." Interestingly, several of the practices he advised for growing Christians also characterize successful athletes.

Demonstrate Obedience (2:12-16a) — The trustworthy player runs the assigned laps whether the coach is watching or not. Such a person recognizes that consistent obedience is required for high achievement. Paul advised the Philippian Christians to keep on working out in their lives the salvation that God had begun in them. Reverence shows a proper regard for the One who is working our salvation in us — for what He has done in saving us, for what He is doing, and for what He will complete according to his "good purpose." In such a context, grumbling and arguing among Christians seem almost as inappropriate as swear words



Royce

in a Sunday School lesson. (In fact, maybe we should think about grumbling and arguing as swearing in Sunday School. Then maybe we would stop grumbling and arguing!)

When we obey God with reverence, our lives demonstrate a purity that makes a noticeable as lights in a dark world. Because our lives reflect Christ, we must keep on holding firm to the gospel; the world is watching.

Keep On Pursuing the Goal (3:10-16) — What happens to an athlete who pursues no goal? Disorganization and discouragement soon overtake him. Paul had a clear goal toward which he was always striving: "to know him [Christ]." This experiential knowledge comes from sharing life experiences, in this case sharing Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection power. How is this possible? Giving of ourselves to Christ and others in accordance with God's will helps us know Christ, and, like

Paul, to hope to be raised with Him at last. When our experiences are guided by Christ's purposes, we come to know Him in a way we cannot when our lives are dominated by our own desires.

Paul knew he had not attained complete spiritual maturity, and this admission is stunning in terms of the Christian attainments of his life. As an athlete who keeps straining forward toward the goal, Paul refused to look back, even on the spiritual accomplishments in his past. At no time in life is it acceptable to give up growing as a Christian. We are not saved to sit idle on the sidelines but to keep running toward our goal of becoming like Christ.

Athletes seldom regard themselves as perfect, yet they keep on striving toward perfection. In a similar manner, maturing Christians recognize their own failures and spiritual immaturity when compared to their Savior but keep on growing toward Christian maturity. Apparently, some false teachers of Paul's day were teaching a

doctrine of sinless perfection already attained. Paul trusted that God would reveal the truth to his "dear friends" (2:12), the Philippian Christians.

Follow Worthy Models (3:17-19) — The world is full today, as in Paul's day, with persons who are "focused on earthly things." Many who claim to be Christians, even Christian teachers, take their eyes off the goal of Christlikeness or use God's grace as a license to indulge their own desires. "With tears," Paul reminded his friends that such persons are not appropriate patterns for other Christians. Paul advised his friends to follow him and note others who imitated him. Paul was imitating Christ, so other believers could trust his example.

Whose lead are you following? Who is following your example? Let us all keep pressing on "toward the goal to win the prize" for which God has called us "heavenward in Christ Jesus" (3:14).

Rhoda Royce is a member of First Church, Clinton.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Acting on God's Word

Ezekiel 12:17-28; 14:4-6

By Don Schuman

A reasonable, thinking scientist can look at the DNA structure of a life form and conclude that a higher being had to be involved in its creation. An astronomer can marvel at the splendor of the cosmos and believe that a Creator is responsible. Even a child can look out over a green field and believe that Someone had to have made all around him.

It takes the Word of God to reveal that Creator. Only the Word of God reveals the omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, yet personal, Lord God of heaven and earth. Only the Bible reveals Him as the one true God in three Persons — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Why are there so many false religions and cults in the world today? Mankind has tried to

identify God apart from the Word of God. Rather than acting on God's Word, they have acted on their own words, their own imaginations. Even the nation of Judah refused to hear the Word of God declared through Ezekiel. They had come to doubt and disregard the Word. When they sought the Word, it was for deceitful purposes.

1. Declaring the Word (Ezek. 12:17-20)

God's Word for the rebellious nation of Judah was a bitter message. The Lord declared that the people would eat their bread with dread and their water with horror (v. 17). The Promised Land would become a wasteland (v. 20).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in



Schuman

righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). Warren Wiersbe once explained that the Word of God teaches us what is right (doctrine), what is not right (reproof), how to get right (correction), and how to stay right (instruction in righteousness).

That is why it is vital that we declare the whole Word of God. Psalm 119:105 describes His Word as a lamp and a light. Without the light of the whole Word of God, we wander in the darkness of our own sense of right and wrong. When we cannot see spiritually, we "feel our way," which may not align with the Word.

2. Doubting the Word (12:21-25)

Judah was lulled into a false sense of security by the smooth talking false prophets who disregarded the Word of God and concocted their own "feel good" messages (v. 24). Today we have many talented speakers who have replaced "thus saith God" with "this feelth good." The Word of God,

instead of being the focal point, is casually referenced in order to give the speech some semblance to a sermon. They treat the symptom of sin, separation from God, with positive self-image rhetoric ("flattering divination") rather than applying the cure, repentance and faith in the Savior Jesus Christ.

3. Disregarding the Word (12:26-28)

The people of Judah had come to believe that judgment was sometime off in the future (v. 27). To them, Ezekiel's message did not apply to them, but to a later people.

Many today do not believe the Bible applies to them. They disregard the declaration of Jesus in John 14:6 that He is "the way, the truth, and the life." They disregard God's Word that declares: "it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27 KJV). They disregard the warning of Jesus that "wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction" (Matthew 7:13).

Another mistake in our modern times is to disregard

certain books of the Bible. Granted, a book like Ezekiel is not an easy book to preach or teach. Some parts are repetitious; some are graphic and disturbing. The book requires some of the creativity and inspiration that Ezekiel had when he first preached this Word of the Lord. We must not be guilty of disregarding the Word, and that includes the book of Ezekiel and all other books of the Bible. This "Explore the Bible" series is a good way of introduction to the whole Word. More expository preaching and teaching is desperately needed in our churches today.

4. Deceitfully Seeking the Word (14:4-6)

Genesis 1:27 tells us that God created man in His own image. An idol is a god that man created from his imagination, either physically or mentally. The Word of God exposes idolatry in the heart and commands us to repent, turn from the false gods to the True God.

Schuman is pastor of Hamilton Church, Ashland.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the **who, what, when, where** details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

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All news items are subject to editing,

and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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THE BAPTIST
Record

Bible club denial draws lawsuit

A federal lawsuit has been filed on behalf of a Knoxville, Tenn., student who allegedly was told he could not hold an informal Bible club during recess. The suit was filed June 1 by the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) on behalf of 10-year-old student Luke Whitson, a fourth-grader at Karns Elementary School.

"The Constitution says 'yes' to Bible reading and discussion outside of class time," ADF attorney Nate Kellum said in a news release. "Recess is non-instructional time regardless of how the school system tries to characterize it after the fact."

The Alliance Defense Fund said it was unable to resolve the issue with school officials, forcing the lawsuit. It was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee.

School officials have said recess is not "free time" and that Bible study is allowed "outside the classroom environment," according to the Knoxville News-Sentinel.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

WCC enjoys summer enrollment increase

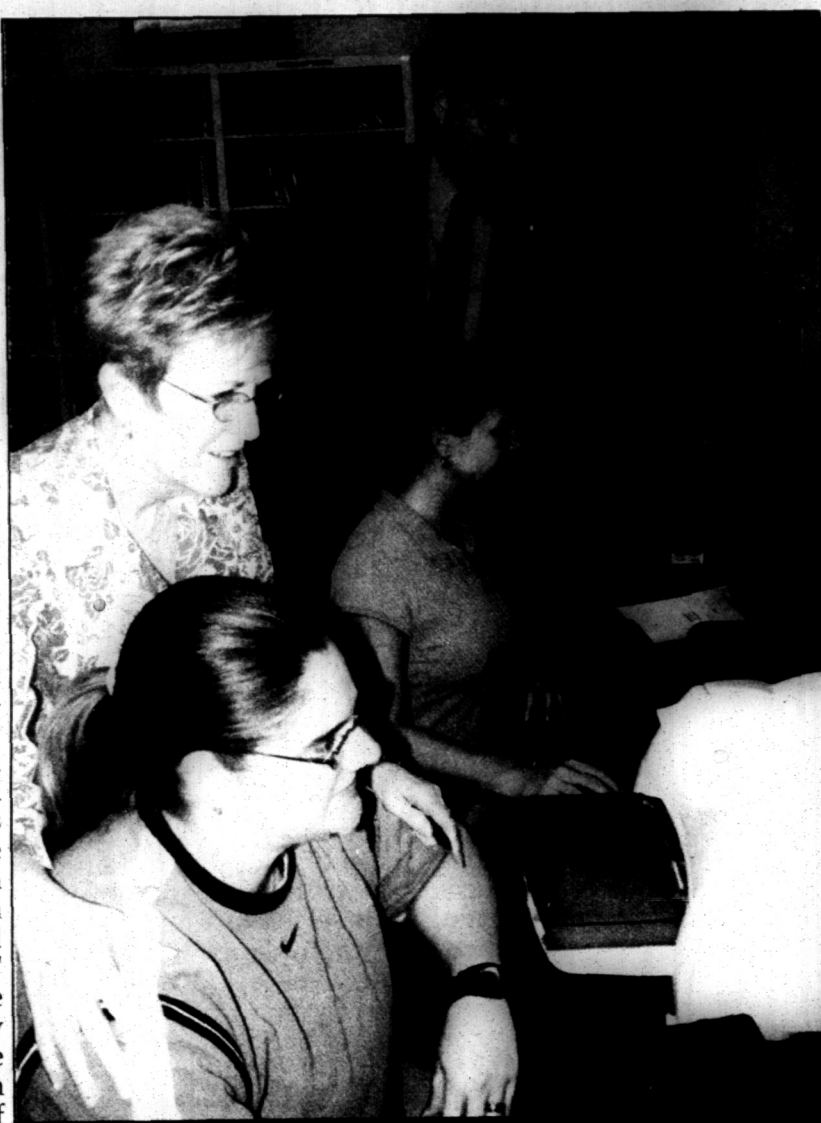
HATTIESBURG, Ms. (Special) — Summer enrollment is up by 113 students at Baptist-affiliated William Carey College (WCC) in Hattiesburg in comparison with a year ago, for a total of 2,266 students. The increase is 38% higher than the summer enrollment in 2000.

One area seeing an increase is the WCC School of Education. "Our department is experiencing growth for several reasons, including a new state of the art learning facility and recognition by the State Department of Education as a quality educational experience for students," said Barry Morris, chair of the WCC education department and professor of education.

"Students recognize we are on the cutting edge of 21st century pedagogy and our advisors build long term relationships with those students both undergraduate and graduate," he said.

The Jody and Nancy Fails School of Nursing saw an increase in summer enrollment as well. "Bottom line — we have competitive admission with high standards, excellent faculty, a challenging curriculum, and strong administrative support," said Mary Stewart, dean of the school of nursing. "Consequently our graduates do well on the NCLEX-RN exam and are in high demand, meeting the needs of many healthcare communities."

The School of Nursing achieved a 94% pass rate (combined pass rate for all three campuses: Hattiesburg, Gulfport, and New Orleans) on the National Council Licensure Exam in 2004, and began a new master of science in nursing program on the Gulfport campus.



CHECKING RESULTS — Patricia Ward (standing, left), dean and professor of the William Carey College (WCC) School of Education; Missy Johnson (seated, left), a graduate student from Laurel; Kelly Ray (seated, right), a graduate student also from Laurel; and Barry Morris, chair and assistant professor of education at WCC, work in the education department computer lab. Both Johnson and Ray are master of elementary education majors. (BR special photo)

Improvements to the physical facilities on the Hattiesburg, Gulfport, and New Orleans campuses likely contributed to the enrollment increase. The Hattiesburg campus has seen a number of renovations and expansions in 2004-05, including new intramural and soccer fields, a baseball and softball complex, wrought iron fencing, exterior Williamsburg light posts, a basketball gym renovation, and dedication of the newly constructed Lorena Roseberry Smith Hall which houses the School of Education and some of the newest teaching technology.

Construction is currently underway on Donnell Hall, which will house the Center for the Study of the Life and Work of William Carey, the Christian missionary after whom the college is named. The Center will include artifacts, books, and other paraphernalia on the history of Carey's work in India and will serve as a center for scholarly research.

WCC is owned and operated by the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) and governed by a board of trustees. Other colleges affiliated with MBC are Mississippi College in Clinton and Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain.

William Carey College was founded in 1906 and will celebrate its 100th anniversary in year-long events beginning at Homecoming in January 2006. The theme will be, Celebrating Our Past; Embracing Our Future.

For more information, contact the school at 498 Tuscan Avenue, Hattiesburg, MS 39401. Telephone: (601) 381-6051. Web site: www.wmcarey.edu.

Chaplain: memorials 'toughest part' of ministry

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) — Ernie Carroll's life now has two time frames: "before Baghdad" or "after Baghdad."

Carroll, director of missions for Friendship Association in Alabama, returned this spring from a 13-month deployment to Iraq as a chaplain in the Alabama Army National Guard.

"I am still in the process of discovering how this life-changing event has changed me," Carroll said in an interview with The Alabama Baptist after his return. In a question-and-answer session, Carroll talked about his experiences.

Q: What was it like to serve in Iraq?

A: One day I was in the Friendship Baptist Association visiting churches; the next I was being mortared, shot at and rocketed. I taught Bible study every Wednesday night and preached every Sunday night as well as some on Sunday morning. It was very much pastoral ministry in the truest sense of the word, but in this case, I knew that there were people who wanted to kill the members of my congregation. That knowledge affected sermon preparation. I approached my ministry with the intention of

each one of us growing in our understanding and relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Q: What was the toughest part about serving in Iraq?

A: The memorial services were the toughest part of being a chaplain. I conducted five memorial services for seven soldiers and one civilian. My first service was in late June after arriving in March [2004], and my last service was one week before I left. My role was to minister to the fellow soldiers at the time of death and to captivate in words the meaning of the ultimate sacrifice made for our country. I never lost sight of the loss that parents, spouses, and children were experiencing back here in the States. The human dimension of their sacrifices was tough to capture in words, but my main focus was the Lord Jesus Christ and His help as comforter.

Q: What is the greatest need soldiers have, and how can Alabama Baptists meet it?

A: Each soldier needs prayer and they need to know that you are praying for them. The prayers of Alabama Baptists were effective and used by God for me and my ministry. The corporate prayers of Christians are the greatest resource deployed

soldiers have available. We need to remember in prayer the families of those soldiers who have given the ultimate sacrifice and not let their service be forgotten.

Q: What were some of the ways churches ministered to deployed soldiers?

A: The churches sent care packages, phone cards, and prayer notes. We were all on the Wednesday night prayer lists, and we knew we were being kept before God by Christian people at Wednesday night prayer meetings.

Q: How did those ministries affect the soldiers?

A: It told the soldiers they were not forgotten and that they were supported back home. By taking the time and money to send care packages, the churches were saying, "We remember you and we care." It made my work as a chaplain more effective, because I had something tangible to place in the hands of the soldiers. It became a ministry of care and comfort.

Q: How does it feel to be home?

A: My sister asked me if I was going to kiss the ground when I got back to Fort Benning [near Columbus, Ga.]. I said, "No, but I will

when I get back home!" It is great to be home. I have had a month of accrued leave from the military, and my wife has taken a month away from her work for us to be together. Our children had [spring break] from college and high school soon after I arrived home, and we were able to vacation together. We have all needed this time to be together as a family and reconnect with ourselves and each other. I feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment in doing what God called me to do in Iraq with soldiers in a combat setting.

Q: How are you different?

A: I am a combat veteran. I understand what my dad experienced as a combat veteran in Korea. My deployment to Baghdad, Iraq, was a life-changing event. Probably everything in my life will be referenced to as "that was 'before Baghdad' or that was 'after Baghdad.'" I am still in the process of discovering how this life-changing event has changed me. I have a deep appreciation for freedom. Having fought for freedom, I view it differently than I did before.